



The Harbinger

Newsletter of the
Illinois Native Plant Society

Autumn 2021
Vol. 38, No. 3

"... dedicated to the study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and natural communities of Illinois."



Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve in Monroe County. Photo: Chris Benda.

In October, the recently formed Friends of the Nature Preserves held a celebration in the town of Fults in Monroe County, Illinois. The celebration honored the 50th anniversary of Fults Hill Prairie being dedicated as a Nature Preserve. Retired state botanist John Schwegman made the recommendation to obtain the prairie, one of the highest quality prairies in the state. It was a reunion of sorts, and many renowned biologists commingled with the new generation of biologists. ∞ Chris Benda, Editor

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Message from the President



Dear INPS Members,

In September we held our first hybrid Annual Gathering, which was a mix of online presentations and in-person events organized by local chapters. Thank you to everyone who attended the Annual Gathering. Thank you to everyone who helped with planning to make it a success. As part of this event, we held an Asteraceae competition on iNaturalist. Congratulations to Susan McIntyre and Daniel Pohl, who identified the most species in a week. If you missed the live online events and would like to see the presentations, please visit our [website](#) to view our grantee presentations and keynote speakers. Another achievement of the Annual Gathering was that the membership voted to approve an extension of the terms of three board members—secretary, treasurer, and membership chair—so these will now be two-year positions.

Speaking of board members, we would love to have new board members for next year! We are specifically looking for a new secretary and at-large board members. Current secretary Angela Kerber has offered to train the new secretary, so please don't be scared away. We are also looking for at-large board members who might be interested in social media or fundraising. But even if you don't fit one of those descriptions, we would love to have you if you are willing to help INPS continue to fulfill its mission of the study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and natural communities of Illinois.

Additionally, INPS has been closely following the effort to save Bell Bowl Prairie and sent a letter to Governor Pritzker; Paul Cicero, Board Chairman; Mayor Thomas McNamara, Rockford; Mayor Greg Jury, Loves Park; and Mayor Steve Johnson, Machesney Park, stating the importance of the prairie remnant and advocating for its preservation. INPS members have been important in attending meetings and contacting representatives on their own, so INPS is grateful for the actions of our members! As the issue currently stands, construction in the area of the prairie has been halted until March 1, 2022. INPS will continue to be vocal on this issue and we encourage our members to do so as well. Please see <https://www.savebellbowlprairie.org/> for all the pertinent information regarding this important topic.

Sincerely,

Emily Dangremond
President INPS

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Check out the [Illinois Native Plant Society Events Calendar](#) for Chapter meetings and workshops.

Welcome New Members

Forest Glen Chapter

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Kankakee Torrent Chapter

Louise Hogan

Joe Richmond

Ryan Sorrells

Central Chapter

Marilee Cramer

Julia Gentile

Sara Gwinn

Southern Chapter

Kate Fakhoury

Laura Hartwell

Timothy Serles

Clint Stevens

Kate Tillotson

Northeast Chapter

Jane Alt

Josh Broadhurst

Sharon Brown Sweeney

Kelly Cartwright

Laura Christensen

Trisha Doran

Theresa Dunkin

Nicholas Giagnoni

James Hansen

Laura Hartwell-Berlin

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Massie Jones

Rebecca Knohl

Colleen McClowry

Erika Mennerick

Joanna Michel

Emily Russell

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Jim Seiler

Paula Stepp

Phyllis Sullivan

Justin Tutt

INPS News

Join the INPS Board!

INPS is looking for new board members for 2022. No prior experience necessary, but a desire to support the INPS mission is a must. We need to fill the role of secretary and would like new at-large board members.

Possible projects for new board members include fundraising and social media. Please email

illinoisplants@gmail.com if interested.

Current Board, photo taken on 2/29/2020.

Front row left to right: Angela Kerber, Secretary; Susanne Masi, Vice President; Floyd Catchpole, President; Janine Catchpole, former President; and Joe Armstrong, Grand Prairie Chapter President.

Back row left to right: Courtney Cartney, Treasurer; John Taft, Erigenia Editor; Connie Cunningham, Forest Glen Chapter President; Jean Sellar, At-large Board member; Gretel Kiefer, At-large Board member; cassi saari, Northeast Chapter President; Emily Dangremond, At-large Board member; Bo Dziadyk, Quad Cities Chapter President; Trish Quintenz, Central Chapter President; Jeff Nelson, Webmaster; Anna Braum, At-large Board member; Chris Benda, Harbinger Editor and former President; and Paul Marcum, Past President.



Annual Gathering 2021

During the week of September 11-18, 2021, INPS held its first virtual Annual Gathering. There were a mix of virtual and “real life” activities during the week. On September 11, there were presentations from five recent grant recipients about their research that was partially funded by grants from INPS. Then, on Thursday, September 16, we had three keynote presentations. The presentations are now on the Illinois Native Plant Society YouTube channel and can be viewed here: <https://illinoisplants.org/2021-annual-gathering-virtual/>.

INPS 2022 Research & Survey Grants Announced

Students, citizen scientists, and conservation groups are invited to consider applying for an Illinois Native Plant Society **Research Grant** for up to **\$2,500** to fund one-year projects. The grant is for research-focused studies on Illinois native plants. Topics such as life history, reproductive biology, demography, genetics, comparative site inventories, community ecology, and research on threats to native plants and communities, such as invasive species, are acceptable. Laboratory research on native plants, as well as projects focused on **research** relating to education about or restoration of native plants or communities, will be considered. Projects involving student research or trained volunteers will be given special consideration. **All projects must demonstrate how they support the mission of the Illinois Native Plant Society.**

INPS is also pleased to continue its new second grant for 2022: the **Survey Grant**. This grant for up to **\$5,000** will fund searches for Illinois Endangered, Threatened or several rare plant species for which current data is inadequate to assess their status and for which field surveys and recovery recommendations are needed. INPS worked with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to develop a priority list of species for the surveys. Experienced botanical field surveyors, either independent or associated with an institution, are invited to apply for this grant. Partnerships are encouraged.

Full application details and forms for the Research Grant and the Survey Grant will be posted online by late November. Check our website at <https://illinoisplants.org/grants/>.

Applications must be received by January 31, 2022. Awards will be announced by March 31, 2022.

INPS is grateful to be able to continue its grant program in 2022, thanks to contributions from membership fees, generous donations to the Grant Program, proceeds from the Annual Gathering, and also support from the INPS Central Chapter for one grant conducting studies within the Central Illinois counties.

2018 Grant Recipient Publication Announced

Illinois Native Plant Society grant recipients are encouraged to submit their grant-awarded research to scientific peer-reviewed publications. We are pleased to announce that 2018 recipient Emily Dangremont, Assistant Professor at Roosevelt University and current President of INPS, will publish her research on starflower (*Trientalis borealis*) in *Plant Ecology*. A pre-print of the article is available at <https://rdcu.be/cyKb2> and is also linked on the INPS website under Emily’s project description at <https://illinoisplants.org/research-grant-awards/>.

Erigenia Update

There are now 6 articles available on our website (<https://illinoisplants.org/erigenia/issues/>) that will be published in the next issue of *Erigenia, the Journal of the Illinois Native Plant Society*. Submission guidelines can be found on our [website](#) and manuscripts may be submitted by email to erigenia.editor@gmail.com.



Congrats to [@curlysumac](#) for observing 77 species and [@danielpohl](#) for observing 69 species in the family Asteraceae in Illinois in one short week. Well done! Collectively we made 754 observations of 147 species, with 21 observers and 49 people helping with identification. Thanks to all for participating. View all the stats at

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/illinois-native-plant-society-2021-sunflower-week>.

Chapter News

Southern Chapter: The southern chapter continues to host virtual programming as well as a few workshops and guided hikes. Planning has started on next year's Indigenous Plants Symposium and we hope to expand volunteer opportunities and citizen science projects. The September 2021 edition of the *Shooting Star* newsletter is available at <https://uofi.app.box.com/s/u5c76e0x9ywj62tyw225kwpfmacqoiye/file/860373878977>.

Northeast Chapter: The Northeast Chapter held several field trips this summer including two during the 2021 Annual Gathering Week. Field trips included: Deer Grove East Sunset Seed Collecting on July 30, Tour of Middlefork Savanna on August 15, Tour of Bunker Hill Savanna on September 12, and Tour of Somme Prairie Grove on September 18. Check out photos, trip reports, and articles about dune willow, lakeside daisy, and more in the August 2021 edition of the *Nodding Onion* newsletter at <https://uofi.app.box.com/s/u5c76e0x9ywj62tyw225kwpfmacqoiye/file/860373878977>.

Central Chapter: Central Chapter has begun monthly in-person meetings again. In July, we met at Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary for a presentation by Vern LaGesse and tour of the grounds afterwards. In August, we met for the first time back at Adams Wildlife Sanctuary with a presentation by Illinois Audubon Society Executive Director Jim Herkert looking more in depth at the North American bird count numbers which was quite informative. In September, we heard from Susan Helm detailing her ongoing process of installing pollinator gardens in multiple locations around Springfield with the help of many volunteers including school-age young people. Guy Sternberg shared his work about preserving blue ash trees from Emerald Ash Borer in a [talk](#) at the most recent meeting. These talks and more can be accessed on the INPS website at <https://illinoisplants.org/central-chapter-videos/>.

In July, Henry Eilers helped us film "An Afternoon With Henry Eilers at Route 66 Prairie" which can also be accessed on the INPS website. Henry also led a tour of Shoal Creek Nature Preserve in September. Finally, we are beginning plans to hold our Native Plant Sale on May 14, 2022.

Quad Cities Chapter: The next Quad Cities chapter meeting will be at the Nahant Marsh visitor center on Wednesday, November 10 at 6pm with the option for folks to join in on Zoom format. Chapter president Bo Dziadyk will give a very brief summary of the BI-CAN meeting earlier this month, with Samantha then speaking of the status of saving the Rockford area Bell Bowl Prairie. Bob Bryant will conclude with a presentation of the Fern Flora of Iowa (postponed from last month).

Kankakee Torrent Chapter: The Kankakee Torrent Chapter is working on their third biennial Symposium coming up on February 26, 2022. We will be in-person at Joliet Junior College at half density, with vaccine or recent Covid test, and will also provide online access to the symposium for those who want to see it from home.

2020 Update to A Lee County Natural Area Survey - 1970

By the Lee County Natural Area Guardians.

In 1970, Donald McFall and Michael Jones were tasked with carrying out a survey of natural areas of Lee County, Illinois during a brief, two-month period. The findings were compiled in a report titled *A Lee County Natural Area Survey, June – July 1970, Donald McFall, Michael Jones, September 1, 1970*. The survey showcased major and minor remnant natural areas (prairies, wetlands, and woodlands) deserving of permanent protection as representative samples of high-quality vegetation. The check sheets in the McFall-Jones survey are titled Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, Natural Area Acquisition Project Evaluation.

“The purpose of our summer’s work was to obtain a general knowledge of the location, ownership and quality of as many as possible of the natural areas remaining in Lee County. Our survey of the natural areas was carried out in a variety of ways. Topographic maps showing woods, marshes, bluffs, etc. were heavily used and aerial photographs were of some value. Several people familiar with natural areas in Lee County for a number of reasons were also helpful. Most areas however were found by systematically covering by car approximately 4,000 miles of county, state and private roads. One airplane flight eliminated much cropland but its value in judging potential natural areas was marginal.”
McFall and Jones 1970

A copy of the *1970 Survey*, typewritten with hand-drawn maps, found its way into Deb Carey’s possession, and stayed with her for the next 50 years. The copy lived in a variety of trucks: her trusty turtle survey Ford Ranger, a Dodge, a couple red Fords, and finally a (current and best) silver Chevy Silverado.

McFall and Jones divided the 1970 Survey into Major Areas (9), Minor Areas (21) and Potential Natural Areas for Future Investigation (3).

Those listings included areas in our own back (farm) yards, basically the southern portion of Lee County which includes the Green River Lowlands.

Partly because of the 1970 survey, and with much-appreciated support from Randy Nyboer, we formed a very local and very small group in the late 1970s – Lee County Natural Area Guardians (LeeNAG). The group eventually slid under the wing of the Lee County Soil & Water Conservation District where it still



successfully resides. Four natural areas in Lee County are owned and managed by LeeNAG: Bartlett Woods Illinois Nature Preserve, Ryan Wetland & Sand Prairie Land and Water Reserve, Pike Creek Prairie, and Mound Hill Prairie. A fifth site, Temperance Hill Cemetery Illinois Nature Preserve, is managed by LeeNAG. Because of the people deeply involved in LeeNAG, other sites in Lee County have been acquired and/or

provided permanent protection. LeeNAG works cheerfully to acquire, restore, manage and maintain natural areas. As Dr. Seuss told us “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

In 2020, it occurred to us that the tattered 1970 Survey, possibly missing a few pages of maps and check sheets, was celebrating its 50th anniversary. It seemed fitting to update the survey; how many of those major and minor areas that felt the footfall of McFall and Jones were now a monoculture of row crops, or had permanent protection? Carey contacted both original surveyors and received verbal support to forge ahead, though each expressed doubt that it really had been 50 years! In 1970, McFall and Jones did not have access to laptop computers and Smart Phones; no GPS; in effect, they themselves were actually their finest equipment, and we are grateful for their tenacity and their willingness to explore the sandiest and narrowest road.

We used the same methods for the *2020 Update* as did the original surveyors in 1970. We are grateful to the family of the late James Brady (Mazy) Long for access to his personal papers. Mazy walked the Amboy-area sites in the 1960s and earlier, documenting many floral species. He sent specimens to the Field Museum and the Illinois State Museum but more importantly, he was one of the very first voices in this locale proclaiming the importance of native flora and fauna.

Because of our limited abilities and resources, we chose first to work on the areas in the 1970 survey in the southern portion of Lee County, basically within or very close to the Green River Lowlands section. It is rewarding that seven of the nine 1970 Major Areas; 15 of the 21 1970 Minor Areas, and one of the three Potential Areas for Further Investigation are within our own LeeNAG “back yard.”

Our back yard in southern Lee County is a wetland and sand complex that includes the remnants of the Great Winnebago Swamp and the Great Inlet Swamp. One early settler described the Great Inlet Swamp as a “place of waste water in which grew gigantic rushes, Indian rice and other worthless vegetation, the home of millions of geese, ducks, swan, brant, pheasant, grouse, wild turkey and other wild game. During the fall of the year, after the grass had been killed by frosts, magnificent prairie fires prevailed until snow came, the flames at night, when there were high winds, lighting up the sky with surpassing grandeur, enabling a person to read by the light miles away, and being visible for a distance of nearly one hundred miles”

In southern Lee County, the landscape has been largely covered over by outwash from the receding of the Wisconsin glaciation. Subsequent post-glacial winds had used the most portable component of this outwash, sand, to shape the dune and swale topography with which we are familiar today. Studies of the substance, structure, and orientation of sand deposits indicate that winds from west to northwest had largely completed this work by about 17,000 years ago.

The late botanist Henry Allan Gleason referred to the vegetation of the Green River Lowlands in his extensive study of Illinois sand deposits. Gleason specifically studied a site near Amboy on August 21, 1910. Oh, what a delight it would have been to walk with him as he investigated the remains of the great swamps. He notes: “This name – the Amboy area – is given to the irregular complex of sand ridges and marshes along the Green River in Lee County, well-illustrated in the vicinity of Amboy. The drainage of the whole valley is poor, and two large marsh areas, known as the Inlet Swamp and the Winnebago Swamp, are as yet not entirely reclaimed.” Both the Inlet and Winnebago “swamps” were eventually drained and converted to row crop agriculture by the very early 1900s. Gleason witnessed the final bloodletting of the swamps.

In preparation for the *2020 Update*, Bill Rogers and Carey spent thousands of hours perusing natural areas (their usual pursuit). Few corners escaped their inspection. Cassandra Rodgers, Ph.D., and Hazel Reuter had

previously completed *A Wetland Inventory* of several of the 1970 survey areas; Bill Handel, botanist and plant ecologist, handled the 2020 floristic reviews; and David Holman was the capable cartographer.

In the *2020 Update* you will find:

- a) Notes and maps on each of the 1970 Major Areas and 1970 Minor Areas as they exist (or not) in 2020, including notes on the one Potential Area for Further Investigation;
- b) Tables that provide a quick overview of 1970 Major and Minor Areas including a table of remnants that were not in the 1970 survey but deserve permanent protection;
- c) Proposed Project Area maps;
- d) Single Parcel maps;
- e) A county map with all listed areas using their 1970 Minor Area numbers, the Roman numerals of the Major Areas, and numbers for the areas not listed on the 1970 Survey;
- f) A cheat sheet of areas to protect (prioritized);
- g) A copy of the original *1970 Survey* by McFall and Jones
- h) A copy of Rodgers' and Reuter's *A Wetland Inventory*; and
- i) A few additional surveys, maps, photographs, and inventories that provide information along with local history and legends.

The documents included in the *2020 Update* are many, and we speak of sites, parcels, areas, and remnants as if they were part of us. They are—as we are intimately familiar with their many swells and swales. We apologize if local names may be confusing, and if explanations are long-winded, involved, and passionate.

Again, please remember that in 1970 the surveyors had no GPS, nor were any parcels photographed. So, locations of Major and Minor Areas were listed using section corners (e.g., NW1/4 of the SW1/4). Some areas have landowners named in the plat book of that era differing from those named in the 1970 survey. Nor were acreages given in most instances. We made our best attempts at locating certain areas that were elusive.

As part of the *2020 Update*, an archival project has begun to permanently protect and index the many scraps of paper, surveys, inventories, bird lists, maps, personal recollections, photographs, and other bits and pieces about the natural areas of Lee County. Generous donations provided a top-of-the-line computer and software to LeeNAG; and volunteers generous with their time are busy scanning and inputting data.

The southern Lee County sands and swamps (more correctly defined as marshes) hold a multitude of amazing things: glass lizards, poppy mallow, cream indigo, blue racers; the list was, at one time, almost endless. Now, with the majority of the county in row crops with its inevitable shower of pesticides and herbicides, many of the native plants and wildlife no longer survive due to lack of sustainable habitat. With only a very small portion (< 0.10%) of Illinois' original landscape remaining, it is our goal to protect representative examples of intact native ecosystems and unique natural features that persist and provide habitat for native flora and fauna.

Our goal is to permanently protect these 2020 listed natural area remnants and restorable acres. We will continue to dedicate our energy to searching for funding opportunities including grants, generous donors, and like-minded people and businesses to help us achieve protection. There are 467,000 total acres in Lee County. We propose in these documents to permanently protect approximately 6,800 acres more or less. That is about 1.4% of the total land in the county. Included in the *2020 Update* is a prioritized cheat sheet of areas to permanently protect/acquire.

The thoughts and deductions of LeeNAG do not reflect any other person, entity, government, or organization. As with all endeavors dealing with the permanent protection of natural areas, there are persons who may feel that we are out to “take” their land. LeeNAG, and any other group we have been associated with,

acquires land only from willing sellers. In fact, numerous landowners contact us in hopes that we might find an entity (and money) to acquire their property.

The *2020 Update* is not meant to be a public document; the document is for those who are working in the field of providing permanent protection of natural areas. It lists landowner names and information as listed at the Assessor's Office of Lee County. It is not perfect, but our best attempt.

The *2020 Update* is a joint effort to focus attention upon the few remnants of natural prairie, wetland, and woodland of Lee County. The importance of protecting remnants cannot be overstated; these are true natural areas. No introduced seed or plant material exists in a virgin remnant. If the remnants are destroyed, our natural heritage is greatly diminished.

If resources allow, further investigation and additional floral surveys will occur on the updated areas in 2021, and the remainder of the 1970 survey areas located in the northern portion of Lee County may be investigated. We hope that in the year 2070, someone updates the *1970 Survey* on its 100th anniversary, and uses this simple *2020 Update* as reference material.

We urge anyone reading this to contact us with additional information and/or corrections.

Debra Carey, Chair, LeeNAG, demydoidea@gmail.com.

Bill Rogers, David Holman, Bill Handel, Cassandra Rodgers, Hazel Reuter.

Discovery of *Hymenocallis gholsonii*, a Florida Endemic Spiderlily

By John G. Palis.

If a person is judged by the company he/she keeps, then I must have been held in high esteem during the late 1980s and early 1990s when I lived in Tallahassee, Florida. As a staff member with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), I frequently rubbed elbows with the best of the best Florida naturalists. Although staff zoologist, my most cherished field excursions were in the company of botanists, and a day in the field with Robert Godfrey and Angus Gholson was always memorable.

Robert Godfrey was a retired Florida State University (FSU) faculty member who—in retirement—wrote three major botanical tomes including *Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Northern Florida and Adjacent Georgia and Alabama* and, with Jean Wooten, *Aquatic and Wetland Plants of the Southeastern United States, Vol. I, Monocots* and *Vol. II, Dicots*. Angus Gholson—retired from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—was an extraordinary “amateur” botanist who had his own herbarium at his home in Chattahoochee. Out-of-town botanists visiting the area frequently sought the council of Angus, and a trip to Chattahoochee was not complete without a visit to his herbarium and a glass of sweet tea graciously offered by his wife, Mary Eloise.

During my tenure in Florida, I spent much of my free time wandering the longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*)-wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*) savannas in nearby Apalachicola National Forest (ANF). I was fixated (and still am) on the poorly-known flatwoods salamander, *Ambystoma cingulatum* (the taxon has since been split into two



Hymenocallis gholsonii. By JG Palis, April 1991.

species, the frosted flatwoods salamander and the reticulated flatwoods salamander). Flatwoods salamanders were of conservation concern although occurrence information was scant because no one knew how to reliably find them. The few records that had accumulated were acquired piecemeal over decades, often serendipitously such as finding an animal crossing a road on a rainy night. My goal was to understand the salamander and to do that I figured I needed to understand the longleaf pine-wiregrass ecosystem. I spent many weekends—camera and tripod in hand—photographing the remarkably diverse herbaceous flora of the longleaf pine-wiregrass ecosystem. Following processing at a lab (this was before digital photography) I often showed my images to FNAI staff botanists/ecologists Debra White, Ann Johnson, and Steve Orzell for help with identification. With their help, I was learning to recognize the flora.

Of particular interest to me were wetland plants inhabiting isolated pond-cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) wetlands embedded in longleaf pine-wiregrass savannas. I had discovered that these were the preferred breeding habitats of flatwoods salamanders and that their aquatic larvae could be detected by vigorous dipnetting through inundated herbaceous vegetation in late winter and early spring. Among the flora of these wetlands was Henry's spiderlily, *Hymenocallis henryae*. This spectacular species was readily distinguished from other local species of spiderlilies by habitat and by exceptionally long (up to 6 inches), pale-green tepals.

It was with considerable interest then, that as I drove slowly across a blackwater stream on an old wooden bridge in ANF in early April 1991, I noticed a cluster of spiderlilies growing adjacent to a blackwater stream. They were obviously not *Hymenocallis henryae*, but what were they? After taking some photographs, I collected a specimen for the FSU herbarium. That decision proved fortuitous as it sparked considerable interest in the botany community. Not recognizing the significance of my find, my field notes for that day have this brief entry regarding my collection of the specimen: "ANF: Compartment 78. Hog Branch on FR 181, 1.7 mi NE of Hwy 22. T5S, R7W, Sec 17. Collected a *Hymenocallis* specimen for the FSU herbarium."

Although immediately recognized by Loran Anderson—then curator of the FSU Herbarium—as unusual, my specimen did not receive scrutiny until the early 2000s, well after I relocated to Indiana in 1993. It was not until many years later that I learned that the spiderlily specimen I collected was described in 2009 as a species new to science by Gerald Smith and Mark Garland (*A new species of Hymenocallis (Amaryllidaceae) from the Apalachicola Forest of the Florida panhandle, U.S.A., Novon* 19:234–238). The new spiderlily was named *Hymenocallis gholsonii* in honor of Angus Gholson, and my specimen was used as the type. Gholson's spiderlily is the third plant named for Angus, the other two being *Carex gholsonii* and *Liatris gholsonii*.

Hymenocallis gholsonii is a rare Florida endemic known only from a single blackwater stream system. Per Smith and Garland its known range is less than 20 square kilometers. Given its limited range in a remote part of the ANF, I wonder if *Hymenocallis gholsonii* would still be unknown to science if not for that fateful April day 30 years ago when it caught my eye as I crossed Hog Branch. I also wonder what other botanical wonders remain undiscovered in the region.

John Palis, formerly a zoologist with The Nature Conservancy, has been a consulting biologist since 1993, specializing in amphibian and reptile surveys and studies. He can be reached at jpalis@yahoo.com.

Route 66 and Monarch Flyway Partnership Grows

Route 66 in Illinois happens to follow the natural migratory path of the monarch, the numbers of which have dropped dramatically in recent years due to the loss of habitat. A partnership between the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway is pairing the historic highway with a monarch flyway,

studded with sanctuaries, gardens and more, sending the message that Route 66 has more to offer than a frozen-in-time capsule of midcentury kitsch. Casey Wichmann, Byway executive director, said the response to the idea has taken off faster than expected, with sizable habitats coming online up and down the route, anchored by Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The habitats will be added to the byway's mobile app, similar to other attractions such as restaurants and museums. For the complete story by Patty Wetli, go to <https://news.wttw.com/2021/08/16/two-struggling-icons-route-66-and-monarch-butterflies-make-strange-bedfellows>

Litchfield Rt. 66 Prairie Project

By Ken Schaal and Henry Eilers, INPS members and Montgomery County Natural Area Guardians (MCNAG) members.

The Montgomery County Natural Area Guardians (MCNAG), a subcommittee of the Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District, signed a contract with Illinois Department of Transportation to manage the Litchfield Rt. 66 Prairie in 2008. The site has survived as it was part of the Rt. 66 right-of-way adjacent to I-55. It contains some remnant prairie in addition to areas that have been restored using wetland and prairie species of local ecotype. It is a diverse site with 297 species! A great deal of effort has also been spent on invasive species control.


A few years ago, IDOT recognized that the loss of pollinator insects, including the Monarch butterfly, may lead to a maintenance burden along their rights-of-way if these species become listed. As a result, programs to conserve pollinators have been supported, programs like the Illinois Rt. 66 Monarch Flyway and the Illinois Monarch Project. IDOT and MCNAG supported these programs through the development of the Litchfield Rt. 66 Prairie Project.



A 1,000-foot-long concrete ADA-compliant walking trail and a large parking lot were built by IDOT on the site. Signage for the project was designed and funded by MCNAG with the creation of an entrance sign and five interpretative kiosks that explain the importance and uniqueness of the Litchfield Rt. 66 Prairie. Several state conservation organizations have also supported the project with funding, including the Illinois Native Plant Society.

Plants of Concern Celebrates 20 Years of Community Science & Rare Plant Monitoring

Time flies, especially in the botanical world, where the growing season never seems long enough to see all the plants you hope to find! We can hardly believe it's been 20 years since the start of Plants of Concern. We've grown into a powerful, plant-saving program as a result of the passionate efforts of volunteers, land managers and landowners, and Plants of Concern staff. Read the article below to reflect on our past, and imagine what the future holds.

 **Plants of Concern** In 2001, Plants of Concern was launched through the Chicago Botanic Garden to track the status of rare, threatened, and endangered species in northeast Illinois. A landmark program at the time of its conception, Plants of Concern has remained a model for long-term, collaborative community science and still represents one of the only programs of its kind in the world. Here, we'll look back at our history and celebrate a few of the many accomplishments that make the Plants of Concern program a success—now, and into the future.



Plants of Concern began when staff, landowners, land managers, and volunteers selected initial species for monitoring from the 1999 Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan's priority plant list and developed monitoring protocols. Many of these species were state-listed as threatened or endangered at the time. Other species were included in monitoring because they were considered to be important species within the Chicago Wilderness region.

Not only did the Biodiversity Recovery Plan provide a foundation for monitoring species, the Plan's section on Endangered Species also recommended that a volunteer monitoring program be established to track the status of the threatened and endangered species. As a result, the Chicago Botanic Garden partnered with Audubon Chicago Region to develop the Plants of Concern program—funded initially, in part, by grants received from Chicago Wilderness.

As Susanne Masi, a founder and the first manager of Plants of Concern, recalls, “When we started envisioning and planning Plants of Concern in 2000, we were all optimistic but unsure whether this program would catch on. Over the years, we watched Plants of Concern grow and prosper, and were awed by the enthusiasm of the volunteers and the support of our partner land managers and volunteer coordinators.” Ken Klick, ecologist for the Lake County Forest Preserve District, shares a similar sentiment: “I have fond memories of our early days of Plants of Concern-led forays. At the beginning of the event, many volunteers had never seen our chosen plant of concern. By the end of the event, just two hours later, each participant felt like newly-appointed ambassadors whose mission was to look out for the well-being of that species.”

Currently, hundreds of Plants of Concern community scientists monitor over half of the 323 species that are listed in Illinois as threatened or endangered. Over 300 volunteers and staff members partner with around 150 landowners and land managers to monitor species at over 600 public and private sites (up from only 54 volunteers, 28 landowners, 44 species, and 62 sites when the program began in 2001). The continued support of the Chicago Botanic Garden, and current funding through contracts with the Forest Preserves of Cook County, Lake County Forest Preserve District, Chicago Park District, US Forest Service Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and a grant from an anonymous foundation keep the program thriving. Importantly, the data we collect and share is long-term and consistent for a significant number of monitored species. We send data to the State's Natural Heritage Database, which is used to assess the status of threatened and endangered plant species by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board.



In 2021, the program expanded to southern Illinois, adding new staff, volunteers, rare species, sites, and partner organizations who share the mission. We also released a new plant monitoring app for smartphones and tablets, produced online training videos, and completed a [website](#) redesign project, bringing rare plant monitoring fully into the 21st century—while aiming to make rare plant monitoring accessible to a broader demographic.

Amidst implementing exciting tech updates, program staff have continued to collaborate with researchers and land managers to determine how populations of rare species are responding to management, invasive species, climate change, and other environmental factors. In its 20 years, Plants of Concern has had only three managers—Susanne Masi, Rachel Goad, and Gretel Kiefer—representing a sense of continuity and deep understanding of the program and its partners. Cindy Hedges, Stewardship Program Coordinator for the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, mentions how Plants of Concern “has helped guide our management practices, and in many cases, made us aware of new populations of rare plants—all of which has helped ensure the continued survival of these species. Overall, this has provided us with data that we as an agency simply would not be able to collect without this program.”

Perhaps the best outcome of the Plants of Concern program is that it has “inspired many volunteers to engage in stewardship roles like controlling invasives, assisting with prescribed burning, and seed collecting in the Preserves that harbor their monitored species. Plants of Concern monitors have become leading advocates for science-driven management decisions affecting our preserves,” says Klick. In the case of Plants of Concern, it’s clear that caring people benefit nature. Of course, nature benefits people, too. In the words of Kathleen Garness, an experienced volunteer steward and Plants of Concern monitor, “The long-term relationships you develop with people, sites, and plants are spiritually enriching.” And Masi, whose final year as manager for Plants of Concern was 2013, states, “I am now proud to continue as a Plants of Concern community scientist!”

Other News, Web Links, & Publications

Bell Bowl Prairie Update

Follow the effort to save Bell Bowl Prairie, a high quality gravel prairie in Winnebago County, Illinois. It is under threat from the expansion plans of the Greater Rockford Airport Authority. It was granted a reprieve from the imminent destruction that was planned for November 1, but only until March 1. To permanently save this remnant, people need to keep the pressure on the airport board, local mayors, and legislators (including the governor). Follow <https://www.savebellbowlprairie.org/> for updates and action alerts.

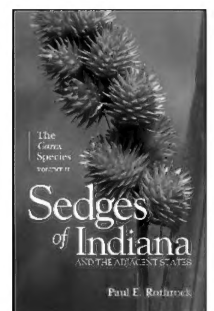


Bell Bowl Prairie is a Category I Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site, containing some of the highest quality natural plant communities found anywhere in the state of Illinois (IDNR 2021).

There is now a temporary hold on construction activities until March 1, 2022—due to the discovery of a federally Endangered rusty patched bumble bee—after which the rest of the prairie within the construction footprint is planned to be demolished. In 1968, this little patch of prairie was saved from being used as fill for an airport expansion project by George Fell, founder of organizations such as the Natural Land Institute, Natural Areas Association, and executive director of The Nature Conservancy when they completed their first land conservation project in 1955. It can be saved again. For more information, go to <https://woodsandprairie.blogspot.com/2021/10/bell-bowl-update.html>. To see a 1989 video of George Fell telling of his involvement saving the Bell Bowl Prairie., go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWEg_Si-zb4.

Guide to Sedges of Indiana Now Available

Just published by the Indiana Academy of Science, the *Sedges of Indiana and the Adjacent States: (Vol II) The Carex Species* is an outstanding guide to the 158 different Carices from Indiana as well as coverage of other species found in adjacent states. Author Paul F. Rothrock is professor emeritus and associate curator (Deam Herbarium) at Indiana University. A must for any biologist interested in this fascinating, challenging and large group, the book is now [available to order](#).



An Afternoon With Henry Eilers

Watch video of a wonderful afternoon field trip with Henry Eilers to the Litchfield Rt. 66 Prairie at <https://vimeo.com/599296872>.

Virginia Native Plant Society Issues Statement on Cultivars

The Virginia Native Plant Society formal statement on cultivars encourages communities and individuals to incorporate native plants into managed landscapes. VNPS recognizes that wild-type plants may be difficult to find in the marketplace and encourages the horticulture industry to provide more wild-type plants and to clearly label cultivars to assist the public in distinguishing between the two. For the complete statement, go to <https://vnps.org/statement-on-cultivars/>.

Saving Blue Ash Trees

Sarah Lindholm, biologist with Springfield's City Water, Light & Power (CWLP) Division of Land and Water Resources, and Guy Sternberg, Starhill Forest Arboretum, are teaming up to treat some majestic blue ash trees, at Cotton Hill Park on Lake Springfield and in Elkhart, with the hope of saving them. The treatment lasts at least two years and involves injecting a new EPA-approved formulation of emamectine benzoate insecticide. The product is absorbed by the tree's vascular system and spreads throughout the tree, killing the beetle larvae and preventing development of more.

Millions ash trees have died across a large part of the US due to the emerald ash borer. The blue ash is an uncommon Illinois ash species. Unlike green, white and black ash trees, the blue ash trees are more resistant to the emerald ash borer because they have some genetic similarity to Manchurian ash, an Asian ash species that is resistant to the beetle.

Read more in this article by Karen Ackerman Witter in the *Illinois Times* at <https://www.illinoistimes.com/springfield/saving-blue-ash-trees/Content?oid=13777670>.

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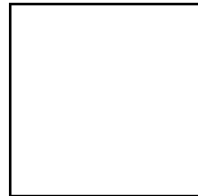
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Autumn Oak Collage

Photo: Jannifer Powelson



The Harbinger Autumn 2021

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